

## When and how can the public get involved?

PUBLIC MEETINGS will be held to present information and gather comments on the ordinances and any proposed revisions (see schedule on page 3). There also will be public hearings before the Planning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners. We encourage you to get involved in the process and give us your feedback.

Stay abreast of current project developments by visiting our web site or contacting project staff

Public meetings will be advertised on the web site and through local newspapers.

### Project web site:

<http://www.clark.wa.gov/longrangeplan/projects/critical-areas.html>

## Your information connection

### Project Managers:

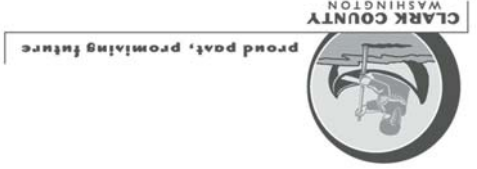
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Contact the Clark County ADA office if you need assistance or auxiliary aids: Voice: (360) 397-2025, TTY: (360) 397-2445, FAX: (360) 397-6027, E-mail: [ADA@clark.wa.gov](mailto:ADA@clark.wa.gov).

Funding in part, has been made available for this project through the Centennial Clean Water Fund, Washington State Department of Ecology and the Washington State Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development.

**For Your Information**  
Clark County  
Critical Areas Ordinance  
& Wetlands Inventory



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# CLARK COUNTY • WASHINGTON Critical Areas Ordinance and Wetlands Inventory UPDATE

## What are critical areas?

CRITICAL AREAS are special areas the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) requires cities and counties to designate and protect. These areas include wetlands, flood hazard areas, geologic hazard areas, fish and wildlife habitat, and critical aquifer recharge areas (CARAs).

## Why are critical areas important?

PROTECTING CLARK COUNTY'S critical area resources helps preserve our natural environment and maintain the high quality of life that local residents expect and enjoy. Protecting critical areas safeguards the health and safety of the public by reducing the risks of erosion, landslides, and flooding. Critical areas benefit the public by providing clean drinking water, enhancing water quality, preserving fish and wildlife habitat, managing flood risks, and providing space for recreation.

Critical areas, their characteristics, and the challenges they present include:

- Wetlands, which help control flooding, replenish groundwater, improve water quality, and provide habitat for plants and animals.
- Flood hazard areas, which are prone to flooding.
- Geologic hazard areas, which have steep slopes and unstable soils and are prone to landslides and erosion problems.
- Fish and wildlife habitat, which is identified by the state as critical or important, and may include habitat for threatened or endangered species.
- Critical aquifer recharge areas, which are areas around water supplies that serve more than 25 people or have 15 or more service connections.



# What does the county do to protect critical areas?

IN CLARK COUNTY, each type of critical area is protected by its own ordinance. Several additional ordinances and laws address protection of critical areas, including the Clark County Shoreline Master Program, the Wildland Urban Interface/ Intermix Ordinance, and the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). These rules and regulations were adopted to protect critical areas and to respond to federal and state regulations.

# How do critical areas affect me?

PEOPLE WHO OWN property that contains designated streams, wetlands, steep slopes, or other natural features protected by the critical areas provisions are required to comply with the regulations—including those adopted by the county—when developing or building on their property.

# Why is the county updating its critical area ordinances?

ALL COUNTIES AND CITIES are required to designate and protect critical areas. Clark County’s wetlands ordinance was adopted in 1992; its habitat, geologic hazard, and CARA ordinances were adopted in 1997. The flood hazard ordinance was updated in 2002.

The GMA requires counties and cities to periodically review and revise their critical area ordinances based on what is called “best available science.” This is the best scientific information that exists about critical areas. The county is also required to pay particular attention to the measures necessary to preserve or enhance anadromous fisheries. (Anadromous fish spawn and rear in fresh water and mature at sea, and include salmon and bull trout.)

# How does the wetlands inventory project relate to the update of the critical areas ordinances?

ELEVEN WATERSHEDS in the region are under significant development pressure. In January 2004, the county started updating its inventory of wetland sites in those watersheds. The wetlands inventory planning project is using Geographic Information System (GIS) data and mapping to update information about the location of wetlands. Data is also being collected on wetland functions. This information will be used to recommend strategies for maintaining or enhancing selected sites. The wetlands inventory project will not change existing laws or add new ones. It will confirm wetland locations and contribute to an increased understanding of hydrology in the county, which will help the county implement the “best available science” requirements for wetlands protection.

What is the update process and schedule?	
Fall 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Refine the wetland inventory and select reference sites</li></ul>
Winter 04/05	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Public and affected groups review and provide input on draft ordinances and wetland inventory</li><li>Input considered and draft ordinances refined</li></ul>
Spring 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioner public hearings</li></ul>

